

ALAN PARSONS PROJECT

'TURN OF A FRIENDLY CARD'

(SPEAKERS CORNER 180g RE-ISSUE)

If ELP's talents included interpreting and performing fascinating classical rock, the Alan Parsons takes a more operatic approach to his music.

Initially more famed as a producer than an artist, Parsons sprung to prominence as a sound engineer at EMI's Abbey Road studios, working with the Beatles under famed producer George Martin.

But it was really his work on Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side Of The Moon', perhaps one of rock music's greatest albums, that music fans will remember most.

Parsons no doubt was influenced by the thematic content of Floyd's work, and from the very outset, the Alan Parsons Project he formed together with keyboard whiz Eric Woolfson, focused on the exploration of central concepts.

The band was a vehicle of collaboration featuring different artists, many of whom were session musicians without any personal fame or public profile - guitarist Ian Bairnson is a typical example. But also included were some 'names': Colin Blunstone, Steve Harley, and Allan Clarke of The Hollies fame.

For many, the Project's third album, 'The Turn Of A Friendly Card' is musically the most accessible, if not always the most significant in terms of conceptual cohesion or intent. Gambling is the thematic tapestry against which the album's content is pinned, but lyrically, it doesn't carry the conviction expected of a concept album.

Fortunately, the music is powerful enough. Of all the tracks, *Time* is arguably the best - and possibly one of the Parsons Project's best ever. *Games People Play* is catchy and vintage Parsons, with a certain commercial appeal that many of the band's other creations lacked.

The title track is also the album's centrepiece, and consists of five separate parts, much like a (very short!) classical work. It's a concept also displayed on other Parsons albums, including the debut 'Tales Of Mystery And Imagination'.

Lush orchestration, superb scores, soaring melodies - all performed with flawless professionalism by a thoroughly committed ensemble - are further Parsons hallmarks repeated here. While fans of the band will already recognise 'Turn Of A Friendly Card' as a must-have, it's an album that deserves wider appeal.

This Speakers Corner pressing on 180g vinyl is as superb as the musical execution, with a sleeve and artwork to match.

Performance: 8

Pressing: 8

Artwork/cover: 8

Price: R230

Supplied by: Audio Nut.

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